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KEYNES ON STATISTICS.

The Scope and Method of Political Economy. By John Neville Keynes, M.A., London. Macmillan and Company. 1891. Pp. xiv, 359.

Although this book, as the title implies, is primarily for political economists, it includes in the closing chapter of about forty pages a discussion of statistical art and methods which will be of special interest to the statistician. The bulk of the work is devoted to a restatement of the proper methods to be employed in economic reasoning. The relative and absolute importance of induction, deduction, mathematical and symbolic formulæ, and history as applied to political economy are given careful consideration. The last chapter is devoted to "Political Economy and Statistics," and a brief enumeration of "some of the precautions requisite in the use of statistics in economic reasonings." The generous treatment here given to statistics as representing a distinct method to be used in economics is evidence of the advance which this subject of study has made in the past twenty-five years. Although Mill and Cairnes discussed the question of method in economic reasoning with thoroughness for their day, yet they gave but scant recognition to statistics as an independent aid and support.

In the first part of the chapter devoted to statistics the author enters upon the question whether statistics is a science or not. His conclusions are not favorable to the assumption put forth by many Continental, and more recently by a few English and American, authors that statistics can rank as a distinct science. Mr. Keynes fairly presents the different views upon this point, and criticises in turn the definitions of Dr. Mouat, Dr. Mayr, and Prof. Mayo-Smith. These in one way or another look upon statistics as a science. With none of these conceptions does the author agree. But while not regarding statistics as a distinct science, Mr. Keynes concludes that "it is indeed necessary to recognize a theory of statistics, dealing with what may be called the technique of the statistical method, that is to say, the conditions that statistical data must fulfill, the modes in which they are to be ascertained and collected, the manner of their arrangement and employment for purposes of reasoning, the criteria

determining the validity of arguments based upon them, and the logical character of the conclusions established by their aid." Statistics, then, is a "scientific method based on the quantitative observations of aggregates."

In the denial that statistics is an independent concrete science, Mr. Keynes, in my judgment, is entirely correct, but it is doubtful if the term "method" contains the full meaning and all the attributes which properly belong to statistics. The statistician, as such, is engaged in the collection and preparation of data admitting of enumeration, which may afterwards serve as building material for the sociologist, economist, and statesman. Statistical work bears the same relation to the social sciences that the labor of the carpenter and mason does to architecture. Prof. Mayo-Smith, as the author quotes, objects to this view because it implies that the statistician is a mere drudge. But when the overpowering superiority of social science to all other sciences is perceived, and the immense importance, both relative and absolute, of statistical labor as compared with all other methods in order to make progress in these social sciences is more clearly discerned, then there need be no fear about the intellectual position of the statistician. In my opinion, it is a mistake — and this error Mr. Keynes avoids — to give to statistics a too exalted position. We need a regiment of statisticians in every branch of political and social life, and we must not scare off possible recruits by announcing that statistics is an independent and separate science, which demands all that the mastery of a science implies. There are already sciences enough to learn; but every student may be trained in statistical methods for right and honest reasoning in his political and social relations, as he is taught hygiene for healthy living in his private or personal relations.

A special topic which Mr. Keynes considers is the function of statistics in economic inquiries. There are laws in economics which are principally indebted for their discovery to statistics, as, for example, the tendency of financial crises to recur at periodical intervals. It is impossible to enumerate the economic illustrations and problems which the author suggests as involving statistics, but it is to be hoped that teachers of political economy may dwell upon this chapter and be convinced of the importance of giving more attention to statistics.

In the note to this chapter the author briefly discusses (1) the con-

ditions of the reliability of statistical data ; (2) the interpretation of simple statistics ; (3) the range of statistics ; and (4) the grouping of statistics. The treatment throughout, while not intended to be exhaustive, is suggestive, and is a happy omen that in the future political economy will be more closely associated to statistics.

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UNITED STATES CENSUS BULLETINS.¹

No. 39. March 16, 1891. *Wealth and Resources of Alaska.* By Ivan Petroff. Pp. 15.

The four principal sources of wealth of which an investigation has been made are furs, fish, minerals, and timber. The total value of products shipped from the territory since it came under American jurisdiction is estimated at \$63,000,000. Fur seals is the most important, being credited with \$33,000,000. Other furs were valued at \$16,000,000. The canned salmon product since 1884 is estimated at \$7,000,000, and the cod-fish catch since 1868 at \$3,000,000. No falling off in the annual yield of any of these products is noticed with the exception of the fur seal. The total shipment of gold dust and bullion does not exceed \$700,000 per annum. It appears difficult to ascertain the quantity of merchantable timber, and it is thought that the amount has been overestimated.

No. 40. March 17. *Population by Counties, North Central Division.* Pp. 9.

This division includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. In Nebraska only one county shows a loss.

No. 41. March 19. *Agriculture, Truck Farming.* By J. H. Hale. Pp. 12.

Truck farming in this report is distinguished from market gardening as being carried on at a greater distance from markets. The various details are summarized in the statement that more than \$100,000,000 is invested, the annual products reaching a value of

¹ Continued from page 236.